

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud simplifies management of the VDI environment, increases security, and enables employees to regain a better work-life balance



Kindred Credit Union Deploys Nutanix Enterprise Cloud to Eliminate Complexity and Improve Security

CHALLENGE

With eight full-service branches in Southwestern Ontario, Kindred offers a complete range of banking, investing, and borrowing products and services to 22,000 members who entrust the credit union with \$1.2 billion in assets. When Kindred was preparing to launch a virtual desktop initiative for its employees several years ago, the credit union worked with Zycom Technology, a Nutanix Elite partner, on a VDI Use Case Analysis on viability for VDI and sizing the initial pilot recommendations for VDI broker and infrastructure. “Prior to implementing VMware Horizon, everyone had their own individual PCs,” explained Tony Bender, Kindred’s director of IT. “The desktops were aging and replacing them one-by-one was becoming very expensive and time-consuming. Zycom helped us put a solid plan and business case together.”

Bender first saw Nutanix at a VMworld conference and was impressed with the technology. After conducting research on Nutanix and several other hyperconverged offerings, he concluded that Nutanix Enterprise Cloud would be the best solution for the upcoming VDI project. “We wanted to migrate to hyperconverged infrastructure to eliminate all of the complicated SAN, server, and networking complexity,” he explained. “Since the success or failure of a VDI implementation depends on the speed and reliability of the storage, we decided that Nutanix would be the best choice for our deployment.”

“With Shadow Clone from Nutanix and the resulting reduction in virtual desktop latency, Nutanix was the clear choice for Kindred Credit Union’s VDI needs at the branch offices,” added Terry Buchanan, VP Technology and GM for Zycom. “Compared to other platforms, Nutanix was clearly the least expensive and highest performing solution for Kindred’s VDI deployment.”

SOLUTION

Zycom helped Kindred deploy Nutanix ahead of approved budgets by leveraging their Nutanix demo infrastructure to speed up testing and acceptance. Kindred bought a three-node Nutanix cluster for its VDI deployment several years ago and an additional node a year later.

“With Nutanix, we can spend more time serving our members —not just servicing our servers.”

— Tony Bender, Director, Information Technology, Kindred Credit Union



Approximately 95% of Kindred's 200+ employees are now using the virtual desktops for their daily work, including all branch staff accessing the company's mission-critical banking applications and Microsoft Office suite. The desktops are also used by Kindred's head office staff, including its accounting, marketing, human resources, and support teams. "In addition to using VDI in our eight branches, 40% of our employees work remotely from time to time," said Bender. "Running VDI on Nutanix gives our staff the freedom to work from home occasionally and improve their work-life balance."

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Improving Desktop Support

"VDI is much easier to manage than individual PCs because everything is centralized," explained Bender. "We can troubleshoot issues and identify any potential 'gotchas' in advance, since everything in the data center can be observed and managed by IT. It certainly increases the stability of our desktop services."

It is also easier to collect data to proactively serve the needs of Kindred's employees, according to Bender. "If a PC is having problems, we usually won't know until that employee reaches a certain level of frustration," he said. "With VDI on Nutanix, we don't have to wait for end-users to call. Our employees are usually surprised to hear from us, since the majority of them haven't detected a slow down or any issues with their systems yet!"

Better Security

"Deploying VDI on Nutanix was a boon to improving security," Bender acknowledged. "Previously, if a PC was infected with malware, we'd have to confiscate the employee's laptop, wipe the PC, and reinstall the software. It would take at least a day, and they would usually lose their configurations and any personal files stored on their PCs. With VDI on Nutanix, it takes just a second to put them on a new device, and their desktops are secure and ready to go."

Moving Production Servers to Nutanix

After deploying VDI, Kindred purchased three additional Nutanix nodes with sizing assistance and install services from Zycom for the credit union's virtual server environment. "Our IBM servers were reaching end-of-life," Bender explained. "They performed well up to the end, but we were getting to the point where performance was declining and we had to buy replacement parts on eBay."

"Tony and the team at Kindred embraced the Nutanix platform for VDI and realized real value from it," added Buchanan. "Sizing the production workloads on Nutanix for mission-critical banking applications was straightforward and allowed Kindred to manage both VDI and production from a single pane of glass."

Upgrading the IBM environment would have been very costly, according to Bender. "With a traditional server, storage, and fibre channel switch infrastructure, there's a separate cost connected with upgrading each of those components. For a small IT shop like ours, it was a very daunting task to get the storage configured correctly and it certainly wasn't easy to grow since we had to buy entire racks to increase capacity. As a result, scale-up was very complicated." Kindred has now moved 98% of its virtual environment over to Nutanix and is repurposing the legacy servers for disaster recovery at a remote site.

Using Nutanix as a Recovery Target

"Right after we purchased Nutanix for our server environment, we had a huge SAN crash on the IBM equipment," Bender admitted. "Of course, it happened on a Friday night at 5:05 pm and it took a 40-hour weekend to recover everything. We were still about a week and a half away from our intended deployment of the new Nutanix gear for our production environment, but we pushed it into service that night so we'd have a place where we were confident our data would be secure. We slept much easier Sunday night knowing everything was safe on the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud."

16x Faster Performance

"Our SharePoint administrator noticed a big difference in application performance immediately after we moved to Nutanix," Bender reported. "SharePoint indexing happens in the background, and it typically takes all day to run. After migrating to Nutanix, the SharePoint indexing process dropped from 8 hours to less than 30 minutes. Instead of babysitting SharePoint all day, our admins can now focus on more strategic IT tasks, which makes them and the entire organization very happy."

"Going Green" with Reduced Power and Datacenter Footprint

In addition to the faster performance and reliability, moving to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud has enabled Kindred to significantly reduce its datacenter footprint and power consumption. "We rely on replacement power supplies in the event of any extended outages," explained Bender. "Since the Nutanix systems only consume a fraction of the power of our previous infrastructure, the move to Nutanix has eliminated the need to purchase additional backup power systems, slash our ongoing electrical bills, and free up a lot of extra rack space for future growth."

Exceptional Nutanix Support

"Nutanix Support is excellent," Bender said. "With a VDI deployment, you have to guess whether you have a VMware problem or a Nutanix issue before you contact support. My advice to my team is to always call Nutanix first, because they not only have expertise on their own products, they also have VMware experts on staff. Nutanix support is faster and better than any vendor I've ever worked with. They get back to us very quickly and we can call them around-the-clock. I recently got a call back from a Nutanix support rep in Australia in the middle of the night. It's nice to know they'll be there if I need them."

NEXT STEPS

Kindred is currently using VMware ESXi, but is considering the switch to Nutanix AHV for its production environment. "We're really interested in AHV's micro-segmentation capabilities and the direction Nutanix is going with its hypervisor technology. We also like the idea of using a built-in hypervisor, since the more pieces you have in your data center, the more things can fail. Moving to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud was a great decision for our credit union. With Nutanix, we can spend more time serving our members—not just servicing our servers!"



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BUSINESS BENEFITS

Moving to Nutanix enabled Kindred Credit Union to launch a successful VDI initiative for all of its employees, improving end-user productivity, enhancing desktop security, and increasing customer satisfaction. Simpler management tasks allow the IT team and developers to focus on more strategic projects, not simply the maintenance of existing applications and services. The end result is a more efficient company with happier staff members.

Industry

Financial Services

Solution

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform
› Acropolis Software

Applications

- › VMware Horizon VDI
- › Core banking application, CGI RFS360
- › MS Office Suite, SharePoint, SQL, Exchange, web services

Solution

- › Improved work-life balance for employees through the VDI remote-work initiative
- › Increased security with centralized management and control of virtual desktops
- › Eliminated the need to perform maintenance on weekends though simple, one-click upgrades
- › Enabled the IT team to focus on more strategic projects by reducing SharePoint indexing time from 8 hours every day to 30 minutes
- › Significantly reduced datacenter power and footprint

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